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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

21 AUG 1974

INTELLIGENCE

OSD DECLASSIFICATION INSTRUCTIONS ON FILE

The Honorable William E. Colby
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Bill:

(C) As a follow-up to our telephone conversation on the warning process, here are some ideas on improving warning capabilities by revitalizing the Watch Committee. These ideas have been discussed with Jim Schlesinger and George Brown and they strongly support the objectives and the approach.

(S) There seems to be general agreement that the capability of the current Watch Committee process to provide adequate and timely warning of crisis situations is a problem. The Mid East war and Cyprus are recent examples. However, there are a number of activities underway which, if better focused, should make a useful improvement in our warning capabilities. For example, fuller use of the expanded National Military Intelligence Center/National Military Command Center facilities and personnel to support the warning process together with some of the procedures and organizations you have established, such as the National Operations and Intelligence Watch Officer's Net should both improve information flow and permit elimination of the National Indications Center as the dedicated support organization for the Watch Committee. In addition, recent interagency discussions and agreements on establishing procedures to support nuclear crisis management in response to NSDM 242* have established a useful precedent in defining a crisis management structure. Many of these same considerations should also apply to management of all lesser levels of crisis. While improved Watch Committee support and structure will be useful, the essential element in improving the warning process is upgrading the professionalism and stature of its members in recognition of its de facto role in providing intelligence support to the National Security Council. Perhaps the most effective way of providing such recognition would be to charter the Watch Committee under a National Security Council Directive.

*Deputy Secretary of Defense memorandum for the President, dated 13 June 1974, subject: Interagency Crisis Management Support

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(S) Specifically, we believe that it is desirable to develop a joint approach to improve the warning process and to achieve the following objectives:

a. To upgrade the capabilities of the senior representatives of CIA, NSA, and State as well as those from DIA on the NMIC/NMCC Watch Team to provide information support for all levels of crisis management in addition to supporting Watch Committee and Watch Report generation.

b. To formally extend the charter of the Watch Committee to cover all developing crisis situations which may involve U.S. interests rather than those involving the "Sino-Soviet Bloc" only.

c. To encourage and highlight separate views in the Watch Reports rather than subordinating them in consensus.

d. To provide staff and administrative support to the Watch Committee from existing 24-hour Watch centers and to eliminate the National Indications Center as a redundant activity.

(C) To develop ways of achieving these objectives, we believe it would be appropriate for the Director, DIA to work directly with your representative to develop a plan for review. If you concur in the approach, it would be well to set an early date for the development of a proposed plan.

Sincerely,

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Albert C. Hall

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CJCS
DIRDIA

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